

The EASY Program

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AnthemEAP.com

Get Organized!

Cleaning out a closet or organizing a home office can be a daunting project. Where do you begin? Here are some simple rules to get you started on the path to less clutter and more space. Having more breathing space in your home will save time and energy (no more searching for lost keys!) and reduce stress.

"What Is My Ultimate Goal?"

An organized garage? Easier access to canned goods in the pantry? An uncluttered workspace? An end to frantic mornings? Whatever your goal, keep it in mind at all times. A vision of the end product will inspire you. Cut out a magazine picture of a clean office desk, or a well-organized closet. Sit or stand in various vantage points in the area you want to reorganize so you can see its possibilities from different perspectives.

Estimate Your Time

If you think a project is going to take an hour, most likely it will take longer, because these things just do! Whatever amount of time you have to give to this project, make sure the last 15 to 30 minutes are for clean up. There's nothing worse than ending up with a bigger mess than when you started. For example, don't pull everything out of a closet at



one time. You can always close the door to a messy closet, but if everything is all over the floor, you'll feel worse than when you began the project.

Let the Project Fit the Time

Don't start a big project if you have to leave for an appointment in an hour. If time is limited, use it to get ready to start your project. Think it through and plan in advance. When you are ready to tackle the project, it'll be ready for you. Prioritize! If visitors are coming that day, it doesn't matter if the basement is a mess, but if they can't get past the piles of newspapers to get to the bathroom, that's what you should work on.

Have the Right Tools

Cleaning out a closet? Buy a box of 13-gallon garbage bags, masking tape, and a marker. Label the bags: GIVE AWAY, GARBAGE, ATTIC, DECIDE LATER. When organizing an office, store-bought storage boxes, or old shoe boxes, will keep various categories of paper separated. Labels such as CATALOGUES, BILLS, LETTERS TO ANSWER, TRASH will keep everything clear. Put photos in a box but don't get sidetracked putting them in a scrapbook now!

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Stay on Track...

It's easy to stop and reminisce about where and when you bought that great sweater that now has a hole in it, but try not to. The more you attach emotions to any item, the harder it is to get rid of it. Throw it in the "Garbage" or "Clothing Recycling" bag (some communities have bins for old clothing and shoes, including unusable items that get recycled).

...and in One Place

If your goal for the day is to see your desk underneath all those papers, stay in that one room and don't wander. If you get up to put your old coffee cup in the kitchen, you'll be tempted to snack or load the dishwasher. Avoid a break in flow by having one box labeled "Stuff for Other Rooms." Put those items away only when you are done with the rest of your project.

Throw It Away/Give It Away if:

- You haven't worn it in a year (or two, to be more conservative)
- You haven't read that week-old newspaper, month-old magazine or catalogue
- It's broken or stained
- It was a gift but you genuinely don't want it
- It's taking up more space—either physically or emotionally—than it should

Bite-Sized Projects

When you find a piece of jewelry or hardware for example, do not stop to put away or organize each item. Put them in a box or re-sealable clear plastic bag to deal with when you have 15 minutes. Keep moving forward with the larger goal. The simple reward of a cleaned-off area will inspire you to do more organizing tomorrow.

Stay Organized

- Hang keys on the wall by the door.
- Place wallets and sunglasses in a small box by the door.
- Develop a system for containing "kid mess." One way is to have a box labeled for each child (and grown-up!) and have everyone put his or her "stuff" in the box daily. Have a family clean-up time every week.
- Organize files labeled "Important Documents" (passports, birth certificates, etc), "Receipts and Instruction Booklets," "Bills," etc. From time to time, go through and throw out things you no longer need.
- Deal with today's mail and newspapers TODAY (shred and recycle!).
- If you take something out, put it back when you're finished.

Spending 15 minutes a day on upkeep is a lot easier than constant reorganizing. Keeping things where they're supposed to be will avoid the frantic searches for keys, cell phones, etc. Being organized is about more than having free time. It's about being in control of your life!

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Aging in Place: Senior Communities Are Catching On

William D. Novelli, Executive Director and CEO of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), cited AARP surveys stating that “85% of older people want to continue living where they are—at home. We can call it aging in place or give it any name you like. We see it as part of Independent Living...”

SeniorResource.com has identified a “NORC”—or Naturally Occurring Retirement Community—as “a community or neighborhood where residents remain for years, and age as neighbors.” Whether in an apartment building or neighborhood of private homes, residents have stayed and lived and evolved into a senior community. According to SeniorResource.com, “Some 27% of seniors live in a NORC.”

Independent living leads to happier living. But what about the everyday things that get harder as we get older, such as driving, shopping, and getting little chores or repairs done around the house? One way for elders to continue living at home and caring for themselves is to be a part of a larger community. All over the country, “caring communities” or “senior cooperatives” are popping up.

Beacon Hill Village (BHV)

Founded in 2001, BHV was created by a group of elders who didn't want to move from the community they lived in and loved just because they were aging. They partnered with service providers and began to offer villagers programs, such as:

- Home repairs and cleaning
- Transportation
- Meal and grocery services
- Volunteering opportunities
- Concierge services

Other Communities

According to a recent New York Times article, there are currently over 100 senior communities nationwide. It's not a surprise that the idea is catching on. Obtaining assistance to remain at home greatly benefits older people:

- Independent living fosters dignity and self-respect
- Communities cultivate new friendships

- Living at home often costs less than assisted living or a nursing home
- Elders prefer to live in a mixed-age community, and not just “with old people”
- Some elders feel more comfortable asking for help if they are paying for it
- Older adults are not separated from the community, their homes, and surroundings that they know

Costs

Beacon Hill Village's yearly basic membership fees are under \$600 for a single person and under \$800 for a household. Discount memberships are available for people with moderate means. Some communities offer à la carte services, such as doing odd jobs around the house, or waiting with a patient in the doctor's office.

You Can Do It Too

The AARP Bulletin offers tips on How to Build Your Own Village, including:

- Forming a core group with diverse skills
- Obtaining information about the number of older adults in your community, and their average income
- Contacting local businesses and health care providers
- Drawing up a business plan

Finding a Village

If you don't want to create your own senior village, but would like to be a part of one, try Internet searching “aging in place” or “senior villages.” Individual states also have websites listing departments or offices for the aging (see the third URL below for state listings). The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development can provide further information and forward you to local help. The phone number is (202) 708-1112, TTY: (202) 708-1455.

Resources on the Internet:

www.aarp.org/bulletin/longterm/declaration_of_independents_build.html
www.beaconhillvillage.org/
www.aoa.gov/eldfam/How_To_Find/Agencies/Agencies.asp
www.seniorcoops.org/
www.seniorresource.com/ageinpl.htm

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Got Anxiety?

Everybody knows what it's like to feel anxious—the butterflies in your stomach before a first date, the tension you feel when your boss is angry, the way your heart pounds if you're in danger. Anxiety rouses you to action. It gears you up to face a threatening situation. It makes you study harder for that exam, and keeps you on your toes when you're making a speech. In general, it helps you cope.



Here are some tips from the American Academy of Family Physicians on relaxing and coping with anxiety:

- Control your worry. Pick a place and time to do your worrying. Make it the same time and same place every day. Spend 30 minutes thinking about your concerns and what you can do about them. Try not to dwell on what "might" happen. Focus more on what's really happening.
- Learn ways to help you relax. These may include muscle relaxation, yoga, biofeedback, and deep breathing. Muscle relaxation is easy. Start by choosing a muscle and holding it tight for a few seconds. Then relax the muscle. Do this with all of your muscles. Try starting with your feet and working your way up your body.
- Confront the things that have made you anxious in the past. Start by just picturing yourself confronting these things. After you begin to feel more comfortable envisioning that, you can begin to actually face them.
- Exercise regularly. People who have anxiety often quit exercising, but exercise can give you a sense of well-being and help decrease your stress.
- Get plenty of sleep. Don't rely on alcohol or drugs. It may seem that alcohol or drugs relax you, but in the long run, they worsen anxiety and depression.
- Avoid caffeine, a stimulant found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate. Caffeine may increase your sense of anxiety. Also avoid over-the-counter diet pills and supplements that contain ephedra (Ma huang) and other stimulants.
- If you are still feeling crippling anxiety, discuss your feelings with your physician. He or she may prescribe medicine to help reduce anxiety while you learn new ways to respond to the things that cause it.
- Counseling and supports can help you learn to express your needs and cope with your feelings and to bolster your sense of security.

Remember that although feelings of anxiety are scary, they won't hurt you. The most important thing is to take action. Any action you take will help, because it will give you a sense of control over your anxiety.

If you or someone you know may suffer from feelings of anxiety, call your EAP for further information and counseling.